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Bang on the drum

Steele Street students strike a chord
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INPORT NEWS

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ARCHIVES WEEK

Digging into the past

SHANE LEONARD
For InPort News

PORT COLBORNE — Dig into records of the past and find your place in local history.

Archive awareness week kicked off Monday and runs until the end of the week, and it's an appropriate time to reflect on not only our regions history, but our own.

Michelle Vosburgh, heritage research technician for Port Colborne Historical and Marine Museum, has been looking after the history archives for two years and is more than happy to share her knowledge of local stories.



We just want to invite people to come in and see what we have."

Michelle Vosburgh

"We just want to invite people to come in and see what we have," she said.

The museum's current exhibit showcases the War of 1812, and shines light on the effect it had on average people. It's not about battles,

Vosburgh said, "But about how soldiers and civilians interacted, about people who were deemed traitors."

That isn't all that offered, said Vosburgh.

"The most interesting things that I find we have here are land records."

The records not only detail land transactions, but families and communities as they change.

see MUSEUM | page 2

JORDAN AUBERTIN
In Port News Staff

Michelle Vosburgh, archivist at the Port Colborne Historical and Marine Museum.



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■ ARCHIVES WEEK

Spend a day looking into the past

FROM PAGE 1

The museum welcomes all to come in and inquire about history. It gets really busy in the summer, she said, when "most people come in to find

out about their family history and background."

A reading room is provided for those that want to spend a day researching local historical events, and

the museum offers more than a dozen publications for sale for those interested. Some books in the collection are about a century old, the oldest can be found

online or on microfilm.

Historical photos are also available for viewing and reproduction, but due to age and special care needed there is a fee associated with

retrieval.

Above all the museum is dedicated in the collection and preservation of documents and materials, said Vosburgh.



■ DONATIONS: Many historical items donated

New exhibits planned for museum

JORDAN AUBERTIN
For InPort News

PORT COLBORNE — There's always new things coming into Port Colborne Historical and Marine Museum.

And what the museum's received recently, won't be on display just yet, said registrar Tami Daoust.



Right now we're not always ready to accept people here because we are designing exhibits."

Tami Daoust

She said people are always bringing in new items, and "we usually don't turn people away."

Though people are bringing in items with the museum working on new exhibits, donors are being asked to come back a little bit later in the year.

"Right now we're not always ready to accept people here because we are designing exhibits. We're working on the collections," said Daoust.

Last year, she said, 40 donations were accepted, and not contained one object. One donation received had more

than 100 items that had to be be cataloged and stored.

"Most are from Port Colborne, because we only accept donations that specifically pertain to Port Colborne's history," said Daoust, adding donations from anywhere are accepted so long as they have cultural references to the city.

The museum is currently closed for the season, "every year we close from December 20 to May 1," said Daoust.

The museum opens May 1 and will feature many upcoming exhibits, including an Iroquois Beads display on loan from the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto. The exhibit will take place between May and September. It will also include the Port Colborne museums own artifacts, said Daoust.

While the museum is open throughout May 1 to Dec. 20, Daoust suggests citizens wishing to donate objects, photos, and documents call the museum during their operating hours from noon to 5p.m.

JORDAN AUBERTIN

In Port News Staff

Tami Daoust, registrar at the Port Colborne Museum, with donated artifacts about to be archived and added to the museum.



portraits

■ **EDUCATION:** Steele Street School arranges number for Niagara Symphony Orchestra

Composer program a high note for students

SHANE LEONARD
For InPort News

PORT COLBORNE — This program really struck a chord with the Grade 5 and 6 class of Steele Street Elementary School.

Students embraced the music with the Composer in the Classroom program, which began in 2004 and teaches children the fundamentals of developing music. Niagara Symphony Orchestra professionals assist them in creating their own musical score.

Laura Thomas, the symphony's associate conductor, has been affiliated with the program for nine years and her experience shows.

"The program gives (students) insight into the creative process so they can build it into something," Thomas said. It's about cultivating young minds with the sound of music.

The class at Steele Street was split into four groups and

were encouraged to experiment with different instruments and tones.



It has cross-curriculum applications — what they learn in music is actually helping with math."

Chrys Fraipont

The program lasts for five days, and each day focuses on a new aspect of music. On the fourth day musicians from the orchestra bring to life the children's musical creation.

"The kids get to tell them (musicians) what to do," Thomas said.

She stressed that the program is more of an enrichment experience and not a substitute for a music program.

B.J. Armstrong, education

and communications manager for the symphony, has been with the program for four years and could not be happier with its results.

"I love it, I think it's absolutely vital."

Children work together happily in their groups, eager to put to practice what was instructed. The kids come up with amazing things, Armstrong explained.

"I think that people underestimate what children can do. They are bursting with creativity at this age."

Learning music also displays a double benefit, said Grade 5/6 teacher Chrys Fraipont.

"It has cross-curriculum applications — what they learn in music is actually helping with math."

The program helps children develop social skills and teamwork abilities in a way that kids don't even know they are learning, Fraipont said.

"It's great for developing

minds."

The children's musical creation, played by the NSO, will debut Friday, April 12, at 11 a.m. in the school gym. All are welcome to attend the event.

Not to be musically outdone by their younger schoolmates, the Grade 8 class showed exceptional skill at drumming... with buckets.

Ann Heinmiller has been teaching her class how to turn a bucket into music. The class started with limited knowledge, and had to start from scratch, but their hard work paid off, she said.

"I'm so proud at what they have been able to accomplish. The class had its first performance last week to the school, and is eager to learn new songs and has expressed great excitement for future opportunities to showcase their talent."

Shane Leonard is a Niagara College Journalism student on co-op placement with The Tribune.



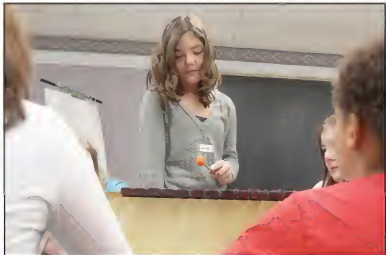
JORDAN AUBERTIN Tribune Photo

Students in Ann Hainmiller's Grade 8 class at Steele Street School in Port Colborne practise their bucket drumming while playing Layer Prep Exercise in the school gym.



JORDAN AUBERTIN Tribune Photo

Students in Ann Hainmiller's Grade 8 class at Steele Street School in Port Colborne practise their bucket drumming while playing Layer Prep Exercise in the school gym.



JORDAN AUBERTIN Tribune Photo

Students in Chrys Fraipont's Grade 5 and 6 class at Steele Street School in Port Colborne are composing pieces of music to be played by Niagara Symphony Orchestra members on April 12 in the school gym.

INPORT NEWS

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ourview

Horse-racing plan needs more clarity

It's good news there will be racing at Fort Erie Race Track in 2013, but what Niagara really needs is for the province to end the uncertainty that has been hovering over the track's future like a storm cloud.

Ontario premier Kathleen Wynne announced her government had made a deal with the Fort Erie track to give it some "transitional funding" that will give it the revenue it needs to run a 50-day racing season this year. It is transitional because it's money that's meant to keep Fort Erie and other racetracks afloat after their slot-machine revenue was cut off last year and until the tracks can find a way to stand on their own.

The public should be surprised and disappointed by the lack of detail available on the transitional funding. It's not clear yet how much money the tracks will receive or how that funding compares to what they used to get when government-run slot operations were located at the tracks.

The government seems to be headed in a long-term direction that would have racetracks be self-sufficient -- operating without any need for public funding. This seems a little bit optimistic as tracks everywhere struggle to keep crowds and bettors coming. In the 21st century, horse racing is having a hard time competing with all the other forms of entertainment out there.

That's why Niagarans and Ontarians should be expecting their government to come up with an immediate, long-term, clear plan for an industry in trouble.

One thing is clear -- right now, horse racing is not strong enough to sustain itself without government assistance. But Wynne's announcement and the media conference held by Fort Erie operators did little to add any clarity about the future.

We don't know how much money is available and for how long it is going to be there.

Have the Liberals found enough cash just to prop up racing in 2013, long enough that the industry doesn't shrivel and die in an election year?

Or have they offered up enough money to keep it alive for years into the future?

There are scores of families in Fort Erie and hundreds of families across Ontario whose futures are uncertain because the Ontario government seems to be patching together its horse-racing strategy on a month-to-month basis.

It's no way to run an industry. The lives of too many families are hanging in the balance.

■ COLUMN

America's dog-on-man gun violence rising



WILLIAM THOMAS

On February 23rd, in Frostproof, Florida a dog shot a man. I know. I know. You're as startled as I was when I first heard the news. Frostproof!!! A town in Florida named Frostproof!!! Like Sweetsoak, Alaska? Or Compromise, D.C.?

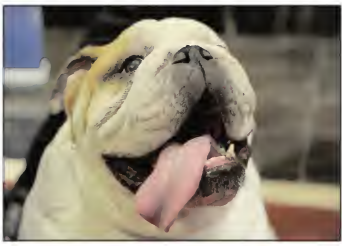
Gregory Lanier, 35 was driving along State Road 17 when his rambunctious bulldog accidentally kicked the trigger of a loaded 9 mm Beretta pistol lying on the floor of his Ford pickup truck. The bullet went through his left calf, out the shin and lodged up in the driver's side door. After a thorough investigation of this near-tragic incident, Sebring police determined that the dog acted alone. The name of the alleged trigger cannot be released because he's under 126 in dog years.

Police from nearby Sebring labeling the shooting as 'accidental' even though Lanier had just left the Blue Crab Restaurant and - I do not want to get into motive or premeditation here but - the "doggie bag" belongs to the dog, okay. That's the rule. How many times can you put the leftovers on the dashboard before the dog, spotting the loaded gun at his feet, takes the law into his own paws.

Despite the fact the pistol was loaded and Lanier thought it wasn't, despite the loaded Martin X-249 rifle, the empty X-241 shell casing in the ashtray, two boxes of ammunition, several rounds of 300 bullets and green-printed 'zombie killers' - despite all this weaponry found in the vehicle, Lanier was let go with a warning "to be more careful in securing his firearms."

In America where 307 million people possess 300 million guns (and those are the weapons with permits, the ones they bring about) and in Florida where they brag about being the most heavily-armed state in the union - having all that weaponry discovered in your vehicle is like passing gas in church. Not pretty but also not illegal.

Lanier claimed he was just tootin' down the highway when all of a sudden: "BANG!" He immediately smelled smoke and burning in his lower left leg. It was at that point the dog jumped up on the passenger seat and stuck his head out the window as if nothing had happened, as if he hadn't even been down there on the floor when the gun went off.



Apparently the dog maintained his innocence until the police finally drove off without laying charges and then he "snuggled" ... mockingly. I hate to repeat myself but leftovers secured in a "doggie bag" lawfully belong to the dog and he is not in any way responsible for the consequences resulting from a violation of that law. Period.

Bleeding badly and probably fearing for his life - "I know what you're thinking, Punk. Was there one or were there two bullets in that Beretta? Go ahead. Make my day." Lanier pulled over at a BP station where he applied paper towels to his wound and the attendant called 911.

President Obama used the Florida shooting to reiterate his stance on gun control and his plan for universal background checks on four-footed gun buyers who have mental health problems or harbour grudges against their owners.

In a quick and aggressive response, National Rifle Association Vice president Wayne LaPierre called a press conference to say: "The only thing that stops a bad dog with a gun is 'Who's a good dog?! He's a good dog?!!' a good dog with a gun."

Repeating his mantra that "guns don't kill, dogs do," LaPierre called for the installation of well-armed guards at the entrances of every vet clinic and boarding kennel in America.

"SPCA buildings where stray dogs and dogs with behavioral problems housed should have two well-armed guards and they should be humans, not giant dogs with automatic weapons."

LaPierre noted that everybody hacked out this time. Endorsing a universal program in which every dog in America be armed, LaPierre explained that if it had been a pack of dogs in a crowded public

area, say the Westminster Dog Show, the other dogs could have shot the shooter before more human life was taken.

"I will defend every American dog's right to the Second Amendment" said LaPierre, "and yes, I would even allow bears to bear arms. But only good bears like Yogi The Bear."

This dog-on-owner gun violence is not to be confused or even outdone by another incident, this time in St. Petersburg, Florida where a woman claims she was shot by a man. And 18-year-old woman by the name of Ayleya Walker (I swear I do not make this stuff up!) was visiting her boyfriend JJ Sandy when she decided to preheat the oven in order to make late-night waffles. Not knowing that's where JJ keeps his bullets, Ayleya opened the hot oven and "BANG!" She was later treated at hospital for wounds to her legs and chest from bullet fragments for a .45 caliber Glock pistol.

While President Obama called for universal background checks on kitchen stoves, the NRA's Wayne LaPierre stated that while guns don't kill and bullets don't wound, under certain circumstances, ovens, freezers and even bread baskets can snuff out a human life in the blink of an eye. He then called for well-armed electricians and handymen to be stationed at every kitchen door in America.

Meanwhile in Frostproof, Florida Gregory Lanier is keeping his Beretta well away from Bingo and giving the dog pretty much everything he wants. Shame that it nearly cost him his life before he finally understood the man/dog relationship.

www.williamthomas.ca

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port high news

Once in a lifetime trip



Port High students in France.

RYLEY O'HARA
For InPort News

PORT COLBORNE — What do snow, benches, and French all have to do with school?

One simple answer, a March Break trip to France.

Over the March break, while some students were looking at university and colleges, or simply relaxing during their break from homework, a group of students from Port Colborne High School went to France on the school's annual international trip. The stu-

dents, led by geography teacher Jonathan Fletcher, left from Pearson International Airport on Sunday, March 10th and came back on Monday, March 18th.

The trip took the students from Paris to the beaches Normandy, the walled city of St Malo, the Chateau d'Amboise, Rouen and Rouen Cathedral. The trip was organized through EF tours, the same company that does all of the international trips for the high school. The students spent the March break immersed in the culture of the country, as well as the history of

the region and the relation to the Canadians in the Second World War.

"It was an enriching experience," said Sarah Potts, a Grade 12 student who went on the trip. She said it was "something I will soon not forget."

The international travel club, as they are called, travel to many international destinations, a new one every year. Next year's trip will be to Germany, Switzerland and Austria. Students sign up one year in advance for the trips abroad, and there tends to be a waiting list for some.

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port high news

Blue Bears back in action

FARRAH GLABB
For InPort News

PORT COLBORNE — Blue Bear athletes are thrilled to begin another exciting spring sports season.

Sports underway this week include, soccer, ultimate frisbee, track, and badminton.

Students were very eager to begin spring sports for

this season. Ultimate Frisbee began practice last week for anyone who wanted to be a part of this year's team. The team will compete in a tournament in May against other schools.

"Sports are a great way to get involved within the school. I am extremely happy sports are back and running at PCHS. Looking forward to

many rewarding games for the spring season. Go Blue Bears," basketball and soccer athlete Khye Edwards said.

Additionally, boys soccer also began practice last week, in preparation for a fast approaching game on April 16th. Girls soccer tryouts began Monday.

Samantha Redmond, a centre midfield soccer player


said she was "so happy sports are back at Port High. Since it is my last year, I just want to make the best of it and now I can enjoy playing with my teammates one last time before the end of the year."

Soccer coach John Raso said, "Our team had a great year last year and we are going to improve upon that this year."


"We have many Grade 9 students that are going to be stepping into the positions that senior students once held - as they have graduated."

Baseball practices will be every Tuesday and Friday starting April 12th. Coach, coach Shawn Coers is very enthusiastic for a new season.

"We will have a very competitive team with depth and options at all positions. There are some good young ball players."




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■ REGIONAL COUNCIL

Region could save forest by slashing books



A stack of Niagara regional council blue books is seen in this QMI Agency Niagara file photo.

JEFF BOLICHOWSKI
QMI Agency Niagara

THOROLD — Regional council could save a small forest every year by cutting the paper out of their meetings.

By not printing their document books and agenda packages, councillors could spare 111 trees and 922,500 sheets of paper, a report heading to council's planning committee on Wednesday says. Regional administration figures shunning paper could spare council the other kind of green: They'd save over \$53,000 annually.

"That's shocking," Niagara Falls Coun. Selma Volpatti said. "A '111 trees' come on."

The report came after she asked staff to explore the savings that could come with going paperless. That would require councillors to get all their documents electronically.

Volpatti said she's been getting council documents and minutes, referred to simply as blue books for their duck egg-

blue covers, delivered like the rest of council, but she sticks with her laptop.

"I don't use my blue book. Maybe there are people who still use the blue book," she said.

Not printing them, she said, "would save all those trees. I think that's more important than those \$53,000."

There's something to be said for the blue books, St. Catharines Coun. Alan Caslin said. He said they're convenient when councillors want to read their documents on a bus or in a car.

Getting them digitally is a little more involved because accessing the server they're stored on requires an Internet connection, he said.

But he said he's been using a laptop since before the new millennium and figured he could get behind a paperless model.

"It makes sense," he said. "I belong to other boards. They're either paperless or

print-your-own."

The number of trees involved "does take one back a bit," Port Colborne Coun. David Barrick said. But he said it also suggests other departments could start looking at where to start going digital, figuring council could be a "test case" for reducing the Region's carbon footprint.

He said front-line staff would know better than council what documents don't need to be printed these days.

For his part, he said he keeps what's necessary from his blue books and recycles the rest.

"It's a really low piece of hanging fruit for us to move forward with," Barrick said of going paperless.

"It doesn't cost us anything. It saves us money, so that should entice those who want to save money." "There's really no negatives to going this way."

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■ **CONTEST:** Port Colborne has come in second in the last two years

Ultimate fishing town

VICTORIA GRAY
InPort News Staff

PORT COLBORNE — Can the lakeside city become Canada's premiere fishing destination?

Keiran Wittmaier believes the people of Niagara can help Port Colborne become World Fishing Network's 2013 Ultimate Fishing Town.

"Fishing is a big part of Port Colborne's industry," he said. "It's a big thing for the area and I know we have a lot of people involved. We want to get people excited about fishing again."

The Ultimate Fishing Town committee member said the city has participated in the contest for the last two years and has come in second place both years.

"I know we can do it this year," he said. "Go Port go!"

Voting for the ultimate town starts Monday, April 15 www.ultimate-fishingtown.com/portcolborne-on.

Anyone can vote and they can get their votes in four times a day. The first voting block goes from 12:01

a.m. to 6 a.m. the second runs from 6:01 a.m. to noon the third from 12:01 p.m. to 6 p.m. and the fourth from 6 p.m. to midnight.



I know we have a lot of people involved. We want to get people excited about fishing again."

Keiran Wittmaier

If people want to vote, but don't think they can get to the site four times a day they can vote once to register their e-mail with the web site and then e-mail the committee at pcultvoter@yahoo.ca asking them to register your vote daily.

Wittmaier said the e-mail list would be used for anything, but voting or sold for any reason.

The town received \$5,000 each

year for coming in second place and the funds were given to the Port Colborne and District Conservation Club, that restocks walleye in the Welland River every year.

The funds also helped pay for the annual Father's Day kids fishing derby at H.H. Knoll Park.

Wittmaier said the committee has learned a lot from competing previous years. He said getting the word out early helps get people excited and on board.

The winning city gets \$25,000 and the World Fishing Network will film and air a feature about the winning community.

Wittmaier and fellow committee member Colleen VanKraligen will give a presentation about this year's campaign to the Port Colborne city council at its next meeting on Monday, April 8.

For more visit the committee's Facebook page www.facebook.com/PortColborneOntario.

victoria.gray@sunmedia.ca
Twitter: @VixxyG



DAVE JOHNSON Staff Photo

In this file photo, lures used to catch Lake Erie bass are shown.



DAVE JOHNSON Staff Photo

In this file photo, American angler Rick Briggs shows off a nice Lake Erie bass. Port Colborne hosts an annual walleye tournament and has hosted bass tournaments in the past and Keiran Wittmaier believes the people of Niagara can help the city become World Fishing Network's 2013 Ultimate Fishing Town.

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JORDAN AUBERTIN In Port News Photo

From left: Marc Desjardins and Pete Babion, donation attendants at Welland's new Goodwill drop off station, stand next to Benji the Blue Box.

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Cutting down waste

SHANE LEONARD
 For InPort News

WELLAND — It's your one stop drop.

Niagara Region and its partner, Goodwill, opened the doors to a new Reusable Goods Drop-off centre.

The goal is to keep gently-used items, which still have use, out of landfills and into the hands of people who need them.

"This is a great day for Niagara Region," said Regional Chair Brian Burroughs. "This was a team effort that will reduce need for the landfill," he added.

Once sorted, items will go to Goodwill's Churchill Ave. location in Welland, said Laura Hill, regional director for Goodwill.

"Donations will primarily stay here in Welland," she said. The location will create a few jobs with opportunities to support and develop more at retail centres, said Saulis Zemaitis, CEO of Niagara Region Goodwill.

"This is a wonderful opportunity to see the region reach out," said David Eke, chair of Goodwill Niagara and Lord Mayor of Niagara-on-the-Lake. "Residents can see and believe in it."



This is a wonderful opportunity to see the region reach out."

David Eke

In keeping with the spirit of the program, the drop off building itself was recycled. It was built from an old scale-house building which was located at the landfill site. The cost of the complete centre was about \$25,000.

Everyone knows about recycling, said Catherine Habermehl, associate director of collection and diversion operations, "but there are other R's. We want to focus on reusing and reducing."

The centre will accept a wide verity of goods such as clothing, household wares, furniture, working appliances (both large and small), toys, artwork, and musical instruments amongst many other items.

The drop off centre is located at 700 Humberstone Rd., Welland just outside of the landfill. It will be open Monday to Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Saturday 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

For more information visit www.niagararegion.ca/waste

■ **ECONOMY**

Region digs into problem of poverty

JEFF BOLICHOWSKI
QMI AGENCY NIAGARA

ST. CATHARINES — It's a problem that leaves 60 Niagarans sleeping on the streets every night.

Another 10,000 languish on waiting lists for affordable housing. Innumerable more leap from couch to couch and shack up with friends, but tracking their numbers is next to impossible.

The total cost for the consequences of poverty in Niagara? Nearly \$1.4 billion a year, according to a Brock University study.

That's the monumental poverty problem regional council began to tackle at a roundtable discussion Thursday night. Councillors put their heads together as they opened debate on a 10-year plan for addressing housing and homelessness.

On topic after topic, from those with no homes at all to those who can barely make rent, they put their heads together and tossed out a raft of ideas

for how to tackle Niagara's housing problem.

"I was very, very impressed, not only by the participation," said Regional Chair Gary Burroughs.

He said he also liked the depth of questions councillors asked and the creative thoughts they put on the table.

"A good tone. They were engaged," he said.

A lot of work has been done on housing in Niagara already, said community services commissioner Catherine Chislett. She said the new plan should build on that work.

She said if low-income Niagarans have a roof over their heads, they're better able to tackle other challenges in their lives.

"There should be an end to homelessness," she said.

"This should be about investing in people having a roof over their heads and having a home, rather than investing in countless costly services because people are homeless."

Region staff were set to take away councillors' myriad of ideas and hammer out a cohesive draft of a homelessness policy. A final document is anticipated to go before councillors in the fall.

Chislett said councillors must also consider how housing programs work together with other services. She said often, people become at risk of losing their home for other reasons, like poor health.

Among the ideas councillors tossed around was positioning the Region as a co-ordinator for church groups already reaching out to the homeless.

"Faith groups already are doing a great deal of work in our communities," Burroughs said.

"I think we're getting to the point where we need to help co-ordinate. But we don't always have to do everything."

He said the Region also needs to advocate for homelessness funding at the provincial level.

"What we're saying is, advocacy we can do and we should do," Burroughs said.

"The Region typically thinks that, well, we should be doing it. Like transit," he said.

But advocacy and co-ordination are things the Region could handle.

jeff.bolichowski@sunmedia.ca

BERTIE AND CLINTON MUTUAL INSURANCE COMPANY

DECLARES A 20% REFUND ON 2012 PREMIUMS PAID



President Domenic Ioannoni (left) receives refund cheque from Past-President Phillip Lambert (right) at Bertie and Clinton's head office.

Bertie and Clinton is a local Mutual Insurance Company that specializes in providing farm insurance to its owning members. By insuring with the company, you can also become a part owner and have a voice in how the company is run. Recently, the company declared a refund from surplus of 20% on property, liability and automobile premiums paid in 2012. Approximately \$2,320,000.00 was refunded to the policyholders provided they had been insured for at least one year and their policy was in force at December 31, 2012. Bertie and Clinton has declared a refund from surplus in seventeen of the last twenty-two years and has provided insurance for Niagara Peninsula residents since 1880.

The company is run by nine directors who are elected by the policyholders at the annual meeting. Each of the nine directors are elected for a three year term, with three being elected each year. At the annual meeting held March 26, 2013 Howard Augustine of Wainfleet, Larry Hipple of Beamsville and Domenic Ioannoni of Niagara Falls were elected for three year terms. Domenic Ioannoni of Niagara Falls will serve the company as President for 2013-2014 and Lubert Doornekamp of Fort Erie was elected as Vice-President. Racheal Siciliano of Welland is the Secretary-Manager.

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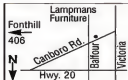
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■ **CULTURE:** Arts Place Gallery putting local masterpieces up for bids



In Port News Photo

Joyce Honsberger, Arts Place Gallery founder, stands next to some of the donated artwork to be auctioned off in the upcoming a silent auction.

'This gallery is an oasis'

JORDAN AUBERTIN
For InPort News

PORT COLBORNE — Arts Place Gallery is inviting you to explore the latest colourful creations by some of the area's finest talent.

And you can take it home, too.

There's something new every year at Arts Place Gallery's annual silent auction. The 19th annual event takes place Sunday, April 14, from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

"It really is an exciting and very important event for us," says gallery founder Joyce Honsberger.

"It enables us to continue through the years, having rotating exhibitions, workshops, artist programs and community involvement."

The gallery, at 714 King St. in Port Colborne, has been open for 21 years.

Art books, supplies and, most importantly, donated art will be up for bids this month.

Most of the art is coming from eight volunteers of the gallery, and a few other contributors from the area.

"People can come and enjoy themselves," says Honsberger, encouraging people to not only come for the auction but enjoy the area's art.

"We need to sustain this gallery. This gallery is an oasis."

For more information on the gal-



In Port News Photo

Some of the donated art work for the upcoming silent auction at Arts Place Gallery.

lery you can visit its website at <http://artsplacegallery.com>.

Jordan Aubertin is a journalism student from Niagara College on co-op placement at The Tribune.

If you have a story idea or see news happening, we want to hear from you —



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IN BRIEF

SKATE PARK CLOSED

PORT COLBORNE — Although it's tempting for people to jump the fence and use the Algoport Skatepark, it's still off limits, says Port Colborne's events co-ordinator.

Gina Murdoch says the skatepark, at Lock 8 Park off of Mellanby Ave., is still officially closed and won't be open until sometime later this month.

The contractor is not finished with it yet.

Murdoch says the park was opened for youths only for March break and was closed right back up after the week.

There are no trespassing signs on all of the fencing surrounding the park and Murdoch says there's also video surveillance.

She says Niagara Regional Police will charge people who enter it with

trespassing.

SAFETY AT FOREFRONT FOR WAINFLEET GROUP

WAINFLEET — Wainfleet residents have chance to voice their concerns about crime, public health, traffic management and other matters concerning public safety.

The township's community safety advisory committee is looking for volunteers interested in safety promotion.

Working in partnership with the township and its citizens, volunteer committee members take an active role in planning community-based strategies to help promote a safer community.

Volunteers from all areas of the community are encouraged to apply. If you are interested in becoming a member or would like more information contact committee chairman Ron Kramer by e-mail at ron@rkramer.ca or phone 905-834-4341.

GIRLS NIGHT OUT

PORT COLBORNE — Port Colborne Optimist Club's third annual Girls Night Out is fast approaching and will see local psychics, live entertainment and a wine tasting with hors d'oeuvres being served by volunteer fire-fighters.

The event takes place at 7 p.m. on Thursday, April 11 at the Brebeuf Hall, 300 Kilaly Street E. in Port Colborne. Local psychics will be there offering 15 minute readings for \$5, and live entertainment will be provided by Randy Thomas. Gypsy Winery will be providing the wine tasting with hors d'oeuvres being served by our local volunteer firemen.

There will be many vendors displaying their items and discussing their services.

Tickets are now available. For more information or to purchase a ticket for \$25, call 905-834-7988. All proceeds from the event will help the Port Colborne Optimists to continue helping the kids of Port Colborne.

FOOD SECURITY

PORT ERIE — Fort Erie Food Security Network will hold a best practices forum on Monday April 15, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. with chef/restaurateur Alvin Rebick.

Rebick is the author of two nationally published cookbooks/ memoirs and senior manager of Toronto FoodShare's award winning community kitchen.

His talk will focus on practices, getting started, key components, funding and sponsorship, volunteers, and sustainability of community kitchens.

It will be held in the community room at Bridges Community Health Centre 1455 Garrison Rd.

To register, email rhonda.barron@bridgeschc.ca or call 905-871-7621 ext. 2226

AUSTERITY TALK

THOROLD — Social Assistance Reform Network of Niagara will present Beyond Austerity: A forward-looking vision for Ontario at Niagara Region headquarters in late April.

Irish Hennessy, director of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) Ontario office, will lead the conversation and talk about how Ontario has become the second worst province in Canada for growing income inequality.

She talk about steps to take to make Ontario more equal and more socially, as well as economically, sustainable. Following the presentation there will be a question and answer period.

It will be held Wednesday, April 24, from 1 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. in council chambers at regional headquarters.

220 St. David's Rd., Thorold.
Admission is free and registration is not required. For more information, contact 289-479-5017 ext.2445 or email lori.kleinsmith@bridgeschc.ca

MOVING MEMORABILIA

PORT COLBORNE — Vale Health and Wellness Centre could soon be home to memorabilia from the city's old areas.

Mayor Vance Badaway has put in a formal request with the Port Colborne Pirates to see hockey memorabilia owned by the junior B organization put on display at the new Elizabeth St. facility.

Badaway says team owner Tim Toffolo has agreed to keep the items on site if an appropriate space is provided.

The city is also in the process of gathering other Port Colborne sports mementos, including those that were on display at Westside and Tedder Kennedy arenas prior to their closures, in hopes of finding them a new home at the Vale centre.

IN
BRIEF

SPRING FASHIONS

PORT COLBORNE — Check out all the latest fashions at Spring Fashion Fling and help raise funds for save the lives of abused equines at the same

time.

The fundraising event will be held Sunday, April 28, at Brebeuf Hall, 300 Killaly St. East, Port Colborne, with doors opening at 12.30 p.m.

Fashions will be provided

by Absa-Fashion-Lutely and the Wishing Well, and unique vendors.

All proceeds go to Last Chance Horse and Pony Rescue, which saves the lives of abused equines. Last Chance

Horse and Pony Rescue has expanded its rescue focus to include educating children with disabilities as well as young adults from community living and correctional services in the responsible care of the animals.

For more information visit <http://tchpr.org/>

Tickets are now available. For more information or to purchase a ticket for \$25 which includes lunch, call Sue at 905-834-7988.



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JEFF BOLICHOWSKI
QMI AGENCY NIAGARA

ST. CATHARINES — It turns out you can buy a lot of Niagara politicians for \$3.7 million.

That's the figure paid out to municipal councillors across the peninsula in 2012, according to calculations by QMI Agency Niagara. All told, taxpayers signed off on 125 municipal politicians' paycheques.

But against a backdrop of budgets running into the tens and hundreds of millions of dollars, it's not as big a number as it sounds, said Brock University political science professor David Siegel — and paying politicians has its perks, too.

"Honestly, this is a view that might not be very popular but I think a lot of this is money well spent," he said.

He said it helps give Niagara exposure when politicians go outside the Region and sing its praises.

And while \$3.7 million seems like a big number, that's 13 municipalities together — and Siegel said for most cities and towns, council cash is a drop in the ocean.

"Generally, I find that council's salary and benefits is less than half of 1% of total expenditures," Siegel said.

Niagara Region, for instance, pumped just under \$1.4 million into council in 2012, but that's part of a \$778-million gross budget. Council's wages made up less than 0.2% of the budget.

Municipalities must reveal councillors' annual pay and expenses by March 31 of the following year, according to the Ontario Municipal Act, the legislation governing the way cities and towns must run.

Last year's best-paid local politician? Regional Chair Gary Burroughs, at about \$167,000 total.

Burroughs, who of ten expresses fondness for a big council, said lots of politicians mean better access for residents to their elected reps.

"The numbers, I like what we have. I know a lot of people are talking about cutting it back. I understand that."

But the number of politicians was far too high for Niagara's second-best-paid elected official, St. Catharines Mayor Brian McMullan. The mayor, who made just under \$164,000 counting the stipend he made and expenses he filed as a regional councillor, said Niagara is not getting good value for its money by paying so many politicians.



Brian McMullan.

"It's not only the cost ... but it's a cumbersome process. It's not efficient, and it's not very effective," he said.

"It's the number, 125. As much as the costs associated with it, could you put that money to better use?"

He said it might be better to have fewer councillors working more efficiently, even if it doesn't save much money.

"The point is, the current model is broken," McMullan said.

Burroughs said the Region's human resources staff monitors what other regions' politicians get. They peg the Region in the 50th percentile — middle of the pack.

Burroughs said that's because Niagara politicians get paid less than their peers elsewhere, largely because nearly every one serves part-time. At the Region, he's the only full-time elected official.

He said having full-time councillors would mean paying each councillor more, not to mention funding their offices and staff. He said he prefers part-time councillors, because the roles draw people from all walks of life.

But councillors working part-time means they are more engaged with their personal lives than civic duty, said Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce CEO Walter Sendzik. The chamber, he said, would rather see fewer councillors and have them paid to work full-time.

see COUNCILLORS | page 19

PORTAL VILLAGE PLAZA

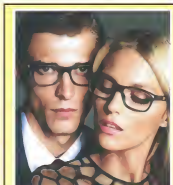
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■ COUNCILLORS

Value tied in to community: Siegel

FROM PAGE 18

"(The reason) we don't pay our councillors as much as we might be able to pay them is because we have too many councillors," he said.

"Right now, we're just paying a whole bunch of part-time councillors a sum of money."

Siegel panned the idea of paying councillors little to nothing. He said that would create a "gross distortion" in which only wealthy people or retirees living on pensions could run, while single parents and entrepreneurs who need to be compensated for their time would be excluded.

And, he said, part-time councillors provide value in a municipality Niagara's size because they're tied to the community.

"Some places like Toronto, it's a full-time job and there's no way to get around that," he said.

"I think there's a real value with having people who are members of the community. It's not a financial issue."

CHEAP CHAIR



Gary Burroughs

Burroughs may be Niagara's best-paid politician, but he said he's likely cheaper than most because he doesn't pay into a retirement plan anymore.

He said he put about 24,000 kilometres on his truck last year buzzing around on Region business. His expenses include a fixed car allowance of just over \$20,000.

And he pointed out regional councillors have frozen their salaries for the past few years.

"Certainly there's been no raise since I got here," he said.

BY THE NUMBERS

What does Niagara spend on its municipal politicians? Here's a look.

Note that this doesn't factor in non-councillors who may sit on committees, but it does count municipal councillors' wages, benefits and expenses.

Niagara Region:
\$1,393,535.84

St. Catharines:
\$378,082.75

Niagara Falls:
\$342,025.41

Welland:
\$236,671

Niagara-on-the-Lake:
\$207,224.30

Lincoln:
\$187,319.08

Port Colborne:
\$184,698.86

Fort Erie:
\$171,176.55

Grimsby:
\$162,031

Pelham:
\$129,103.62

West Lincoln:
\$127,510

Thorold:
\$117,874

Wainfleet:
\$80,895.36

Total:
\$3,718,147.77



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■ TRANSIT

Revenue, ridership low on Region buses

JEFF BOLICHOWSKI
Standard Staff

An average of five riders per trip rode Niagara Region Transit buses in 2012, as the system rolled to a budget shortfall.

The pilot project was expected to bring in about \$651,000 over the year, but fell \$216,000 short of the revenue goal, according to a report bound for regional council's public works committee. While reduced operating costs trimmed the overall loss to \$55,000 above projections, the ridership numbers still sparked some worry.

"That's a red flag in terms of the absolute numbers of riders," said Welland Mayor Barry Sharpe. "Knowing that is going to be a concern for a lot of members of council."

**NUMERICAL
WOES**

\$651,000
Expected NRT revenue

\$435,000
Actual NRT revenue

\$55,000
Total loss over projections after operating savings

Sharpe said Niagara Region must show there are "dramatic prospects for growth" for the transit line, running on a three-year pilot program, or "I think there's going to be a move to short-circuit this"

by regional councillors.

The Region figured the bus service would cost just over \$2 million, between projected revenue and its \$2.7 million budget. The extra loss bumps the cost up to just over \$2.1 million.

The shortfall was covered off by savings in other programs.

The report said about 129,000 riders used the buses in 2012 — 57% of what was expected. But ridership showed an upward trend.

In the last quarter of the year, ridership increased 28%. But regular riders were down 23% as more students carrying U-Passes jumped aboard. In November and December, more than half the system's riders were U-Pass holders.

"Normally, the students are

somewhere around a quarter to 30% of ridership, said associate transportation planning director Kumar Ranjan. "In the Region, they're a little over 40%."

He said the work now is to attract regular commuters — but he said they are coming. "We are optimistic," he said of the bus line. "Obviously, we're not there yet, but we're optimistic ridership is growing. The signs of progress are there all around."

Port Colborne Councillor David Barrick said the projections "were too high to begin with, using the GTA as a model. Niagara is not the Greater Toronto Area."

The budget shortfall is manageable, he said, and ridership numbers are moving in the right direction: Upward.

see TRANSIT | page 21



BOB TYMCZYSZYŃ QMI Agency Niagara

Buses line up for passengers at the downtown terminal in St. Catharines. Niagara Region released how much money its transit system made in its first quarter.

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BACKING PLATE

DRUMS



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\$39⁹⁵

COMPLETE W/SHOES



COMPLETE W/BEARINGS

IDLER W/SHOES
COMPLETE
\$19⁹⁵

STARTING AT
\$49⁹⁵



A FRAME JACK
\$15⁹⁵
2000 LBS CAP



MARINE JACK
\$29⁹⁵
1000 LBS CAP

■ TRANSIT

'We have to jump into this'

FROM PAGE 20

He said the key is to establish a consistent, reliable system.

"If we had one overall service provider, you'd have that consistency," Barrick said.

Sharpe said the first year of a transit pilot likely doesn't

tell the whole story, but he said he wants to see the system's routes looked at.

"It's pretty clear it's students who are likely what will drive demand going forward," he said.

"We've got to decide whether we can offer a

system which is important for students and provide a convenience for a relatively small minority of people living in Niagara."

The report said the bus line also needs to find a better way to link commuters from Region feeder buses

to city systems. And differing fare box technology means regional bus passes have to be logged by bus operators.

Sales of regional bus passes are lower in Niagara Falls, because while they're sold in three places in St. Catharines and Welland,

only one site in the Falls offers them. They're not sold at all in Fort Erie or Port Colborne.

Those issues could be solved by scrapping the pilot and having a single one-Niagara transit model, said Port Colborne Mayor Vance

Badawey.

"At the end of the day, we have to jump into this," he said. "We can't do it halfway. And I think that's what we've been doing for the past year."

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■ **GRANTS:** Applications accepted in Port Colborne

Hydro board to energize non-profits' accounts

MARYANNE FIRTH
InPort News Staff

PORT COLBORNE — Port Colborne Hydro is looking to give local community groups a boost.

The hydro board is accepting applications for its coming granting period and looking for worthy non-profit organizations and community

groups in need of funds.

Application forms are available at www.portcolborne.ca.

Deadline to apply for the spring funding allotment is Tuesday, April 30. Recipients will then be chosen and funds handed out on July 1.

Applicants are asked to outline the mandate of their organization, their intentions for the money and the ben-

efit their work offers to the community.

At the end of January, the hydro board doled out \$22,650 in permissive grants. There is a total \$40,000 available to be given away in 2013, but it's at the discretion of the board how much is actually granted.

Although Canadian Niagara Power purchased the utility

from the City of Port Colborne in 2012, some revenue remains to fund the grants.

In 2014, Port Colborne Fibre Inc., also owned by the city, is expected to become the granting agency using dividends from Niagara Region Broadband Network.

maryanne.firth@sunmedia.ca
Twitter: @mfirth17ribune

SPOTLIGHT on service



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